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THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

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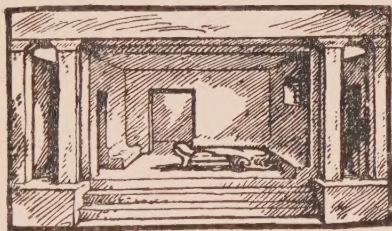
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Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., London

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

A Dramatic Scene, founded upon two of
Plato's Dialogues, the 'Crito' and the
'Phaedo'; adapted for the stage by
LAURENCE HOUSMAN



London
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1925



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PREFACE

PLATO's great dialogue of the death of Socrates presents, by reason of its length and complexity, a somewhat formidable obstacle to a dramatisation of the event. The 'Phaedo' is far too famous to be ignored in any reconstruction of that scene in a new form. One might as well try to write a Passion-play ignoring the gospel narrative, or to stage Dr. Johnson without drawing upon Boswell.

Yet the 'Phaedo,' as it stands in bulk, is not and cannot be made dramatic for practical use. Nevertheless the whole situation, especially toward the end, is so finely dramatic that the reader cannot fail to be struck by its scenic as well as its philosophic beauty. Embedded in those many pages of disputation is a great dramatic theme, with the added attraction that it is, in all probability, very close to actual fact—a true record of the way in which Socrates met his death.

And so, for many years, I have wished and hoped that it might be possible, while paying due homage to the substance of the dialogue, to extract from it that essence of drama which it contains, in a form that would make stage-presentation practicable.

I have now made the attempt. Such a venture is scarcely likely to please scholars, who find the dialogue in its original form all-satisfying, and to

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whom its drastic curtailment, and the frequent breaches in the close web of its argument which dramatic exigencies compel, will seem almost like desecration.

But there is another and a much larger public to whom the dialogue as it now exists can make but a doubtful appeal, or may even be, by reason of its difficulty, almost a sealed book. And if to this larger public I can bring something of the beauty of one of the greatest death-scenes in history, I shall have done what I wished.

But even in its greatly reduced and simplified form, and in spite of the lighter interludes which the action has enabled me to introduce, the discussion here presented can hardly claim to be of sustained dramatic interest throughout ; and it is a question, to be settled in practice, whether a modern audience can sit through it, and listen with interest to a debate so different in character from those—equally long—which the genius of Mr. Bernard Shaw has made not merely tolerable but entertaining upon the stage. So, while I have retained as much as possible of the dialogue, I have so arranged it that at a given point, where the action has turned to pure discussion, the scene may close and re-open again upon the final development of the argument. And though I hope that audiences do exist—more likely, perhaps, in schools and other seats of learning than in the outside world—where the whole of the shortened dialogue will prove acceptable, I have thus provided a way out for those other audiences whose main interest, like fox-hunters, is to be ‘in at the death.’

PREFACE

And it is such a splendid death—so moving, so nobly dramatic—that I feel confident of being more often forgiven than condemned for re-shaping it into a form available for modern audiences which do not wish to study philosophy, but may yet wish to see how a great philosopher encountered death and the doubt, which still exists, whether virtue is to have its reward in an after-life.

Personally, the arguments which satisfied Socrates leave me quite unconvinced. But had the convictions of Socrates gone the other way, I feel sure that he would have found as good a reason for dying cheerfully with the darker prospect before him as that provided by the expectation of a better world to come. For he was essentially of the heroic mould ; and the best kind of hero is he who remains heroic when the reason for being so fails of its logic and falls back on human will.

L. H.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

SOCRATES.

CRITO *His friend.*

PHAEDO *His beloved disciple.*

SIMMIAS	}	<i>Strangers to Athens.</i>
CEBES		
PHAEDONDES		
EUCLEIDES		
TERPSION		

XANTIPPE *His wife.*

TIMOCLES	}	<i>His children.</i>
PANTARKES		

THE JAILOR.

1ST COMMISSIONER.

2ND COMMISSIONER.

SENTRY.

ARMOURER.

TWO ATTENDANTS.

Disciples of Socrates :

APOLLODORUS, CRITOBULUS, HERMOGENES, EPIGENES,

ANTISTHENES, MENEXENUS, AESCHINES, CTESIPPUS.

Applications for permission to perform this Play should be made to the Secretary, Incorporated Society of Authors, 11 Gower Street, London, W.C. 1.

THE DEATH OF SOCRATES

SCENE: *The Prison-house, and the cell of SOCRATES. The scene is divided into three parts, where the cell stands central between outer corridors. The cell has a door to left; to right a small window set rather high. At the back a wide doorway opens into a well-lighted corridor. Round the walls of the cell are stone benches. Under the window, projecting toward the centre, is a narrow couch straight of outline; on it SOCRATES lies asleep. CRITO sits by the door watching him. It is the dusk of dawn. In the outer corridor on the left paces a SENTRY; into the other, where stands a fountain, comes presently a SERVANT to draw water. The sun rises; SOCRATES wakes.*

SOCRATES. What have you come for, Crito? It must be quite early.

CRITO. Yes.

SOCRATES. What time is it?

CRITO. About dawn, Socrates.

SOCRATES. I wonder the Jailor let you in.

CRITO. He has got to know me. Also I have done him a service for which he is grateful.

[A few moments later across the inner corridor passes the JAILOR; he stops, looks in, nods to CRITO, and passes out of view. Almost immediately he reappears in the outer corridor, and signals for the SENTRY. He speaks, and the SENTRY goes. After a few moments of attention to the voices within, the JAILOR goes also.]

SOCRATES. Have you only just arrived?

CRITO. No; I have been here some time.

SOCRATES. And did not wake me?

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CRITO. You were sleeping so peacefully, Socrates. It filled me with wonder — knowing what will happen to-day.

SOCRATES. You mean that the ship has come, from Delos ?

CRITO [*much moved*]. It arrived last night, Socrates.

SOCRATES. When a man is as old as I am, Crito, he ought not to repine at death.

CRITO. Men older than you do so.

SOCRATES. Yes ; age does not always cure folly.

. . . But what have you come for—so early ?

CRITO [*eagerly*]. Socrates, there is yet time ! The Jailor has kept his promise to me, and has called off the guard. Oh, I entreat you once more to take the advice of your friends and escape !

SOCRATES. For my good, or for theirs, Crito ?

CRITO. As to your own good, I know you are quite indifferent.

SOCRATES. There you are mistaken, my friend.

CRITO. But for theirs—for mine, Socrates ! For who will believe that I wanted you to escape and that you refused ? And how shall I bear the disgrace of it when so many will believe that I saved my money instead of saving my friend ?

SOCRATES. Why trouble about the opinion of the many, Crito ? Good men will not think that of you.

CRITO. But the many have such power ! See what evil they have brought on you.

SOCRATES. No, Crito ; they have no power. I could wish they had : for if they could do evil they might also do good. But they cannot make a man wise or foolish ; it is all left to chance.

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CRITO. So is a chance left for you to escape, Socrates. For I know—one of the Eleven told me—that none of them really wishes you to die.

SOCRATES. Then why have they condemned me ?

CRITO. When you refused to pay a fine or go into exile, the laws gave them no alternative.

SOCRATES. Then let us obey the laws, Crito. All my life I have willingly lived under them ; and when formerly I might have done so, I did not choose to separate myself from Athens.

CRITO. Perhaps that was only convenience ; but now it is your life, Socrates. And giving up that which you so easily might save, you desert your friends, you betray your children.

SOCRATES. But my friends will remember me, Crito, and will also look after my children. And I shall leave them with a better memory of me, and to my children a better inheritance, if, instead of running away, I remain law-abiding.

CRITO. But life, your life, Socrates !

SOCRATES. You speak of life as though life by itself were something valuable. But is it ? For in the body you may have disease and corruption, making life thenceforth not good but evil. And may not a like disease and corruption afflict that higher nature which we call the soul, making that also worthless ?

CRITO. I cannot deny it.

SOCRATES. And which is the more honourable, the soul or the body ?

CRITO [*reluctantly*]. Not the body, Socrates.

SOCRATES. By which answer I see that you and I

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are now of one mind, Crito : that the circumstance does not alter the case. For that which is right is right irrespective of our wishes. And though evil surround it, trying to have power over it, it remains right still ; nor can the right ever right itself in the face of affliction by doing evil.

CRITO [*sadly*]. I agree, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Therefore, even to obtain what may seem to us present good, we must do no wrong.

CRITO. No . . . we must not.

SOCRATES. Nor, when injured, do injury in return ; for he that is good injures no one. But if the good do evil in return for evil—which is the way of the many—then the good are unjust to themselves ; and the evil they do to another comes home to them.

CRITO. Comes ? How ?

SOCRATES. If others, misusing the laws, have sought to do me injury, and I, to escape their injury, misuse the laws in return, then it is not only the laws which I have injured, but myself in becoming estranged from those with whom I ought to remain friends.

[*He pauses.*]

CRITO. I am listening, Socrates.

SOCRATES. For is there not clear proof that while they pleased me I accepted them, making use of them, and living as a citizen under their protection. So if, for my own convenience, I escape from the laws now, because they have been used against me, what will they say to me when we meet in the other world ?

CRITO. What do you think they will say ?

SOCRATES. Will they not remind me that at my

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trial I might, had I wished, have chosen banishment? But what the State would have allowed then, it does not now. And then I pretended to prefer death, and that I was not unwilling to die. And if they ask whether what I said then was true or untrue, what shall I answer? . . . Having no answer, shall I not be ashamed?

CRITO. Have it—as you wish, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Yes; for now, being of a clear conscience towards them, I hear the laws speaking to me, and what they say is this: ‘Think not of life or children, or friends first, and of justice afterwards; but of justice first, so that you may meet justice unafraid in the unseen world which awaits you. For neither will you nor any you love be happier, or holier, or more justified either in this life or in the next, if you do now as Crito would have you do. Now you depart innocent, one who endures but has not done evil, a victim not of the laws but of man’s misuse of them. But if you repay evil with evil, breaking your covenant with us, and wronging those you had least cause to wrong—yourself, your friends, your country, and us—then, so long as you live we shall visit you with anger, and our brothers—the laws of the other world—will receive you as an enemy, because on earth your hand was against us!’ There, dear Crito, are the words I seem to hear, like the sound of flute-playing to one that, in a vision, hears. . . . And if what they say is true, there is no escape for me, Crito. Yet, if you have more to say, speak!

CRITO [*quietly resigned*]. I have nothing more to say, Socrates.

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SOCRATES. Then let the matter stand, Crito ;
I must do God's will.

[CRITO rises, goes to the door, and after a pause speaks.]

CRITO. You are right, Socrates.

[He goes out, closing the door, and in the outer corridor meets the JAILOR.]

JAILOR. The Commissioners have come, sir.

CRITO. The Commissioners ?

JAILOR. From the Eleven ; with orders that the execution shall be to-day. Sir, I did not think they would come so soon !

CRITO. It does not matter, friend.

JAILOR [*startled*]. But is he not still there ?

CRITO. See for yourself ; yes. I thank you for your good will.

JAILOR. I think there's nobody, sir, wishes for him to die !

CRITO. Except himself. . . . Here they come. I shall return presently.

[Two COMMISSIONERS enter, attended by an ARMOURER. CRITO passes them silently, and goes.]

1ST COMMISSIONER. Your prisoner is awake ?

JAILOR. I believe so, sir.

2ND COMMISSIONER. Who is that—just gone ?

JAILOR. One of his friends, sir.

2ND COMMISSIONER. Here—so early ?

JAILOR. He has always had friends here, sir, every day.

1ST COMMISSIONER. Well, this is the last. Open !

[The JAILOR opens the door and stands aside for the COMMISSIONERS to enter ; then following,

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passes on to the inner corridor, and there waits.

SOCRATES *has mounted a bench, and stands with his back to them, looking out of the window.*

1ST COMMISSIONER. The day has come, Socrates.

SOCRATES [*dismounting*]. I was just looking at it—from my window.

2ND COMMISSIONER. Also the ship has come.

SOCRATES. From Delos ? Last night, I heard.

1ST COMMISSIONER. It was then too late—unfortunately.

SOCRATES. Thank you ; it did not matter. I could not have slept better than I have done.

1ST COMMISSIONER. Socrates, here we have the warrant. Do you wish to read it ?

SOCRATES. Read it to the Jailor. If he understands, that will be sufficient. It hardly concerns me.

2ND COMMISSIONER. Does not concern *you* ?

SOCRATES. The reading of it does not, since I know already what it contains.

1ST COMMISSIONER. To-day the People's will is to be executed.

SOCRATES. ' The People's will ' ? That is a new name for me. To-morrow they must make another, I fear.

1ST COMMISSIONER. Come ! If you will go inside, the armourer will strike off your chains for you.

SOCRATES. He is very welcome. Tell me, why did you put chains on me ?

1ST COMMISSIONER. It is the custom with condemned prisoners.

SOCRATES. Then why now do you take them off ?

1ST COMMISSIONER. The time being so short there is no longer any chance of your escaping.

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SOCRATES. I am sorry there should have been any doubt in the matter. So you thought I might run away? Do I look much of a runner?

2ND COMMISSIONER. To avoid death even old men are sometimes foolish.

SOCRATES. I said that myself only this morning! Oh, yes; often in battle, if a man is willing to throw away his arms and kneel down to his pursuers, he may escape death. And in other dangers there are ways of escaping death if a man is ready to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is not to avoid death, but foolishness: for that runs faster, and is to be found everywhere. I am old, and move slowly; and the slower runner has overtaken me. But my more nimble accusers—it is the fast runner, folly, which has overtaken *them*. But I had much rather be overtaken by death; and so did not even try to escape, though I might have succeeded. And as I abide my choice, so they must abide theirs. . . . Yes, I suppose these things are fate, and that fate is good for us. . . . Come, Armourer, and set my legs free; since that is all you can do for me!

[He goes into the inner corridor, followed by the
ARMOURER. *The JAILOR directs them where to*
go. Presently a hammering of metal is heard.
To the outer corridor on the right comes
XANTIPPE *with her two children. She is weep-*
ing. A SERVANT meets her and goes in to tell
the JAILOR: she follows to the inner corridor,
and there waits (unseen but heard) while the
JAILOR goes to tell SOCRATES.

1ST COMMISSIONER. So! He means to die?

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2ND COMMISSIONER. Were he to petition now, would it be of any avail ?

1ST COMMISSIONER. If he did—I have instructions. No one wants him to die.

2ND COMMISSIONER. Should he not be told ?

1ST COMMISSIONER. If he seemed to need telling.

2ND COMMISSIONER. There was always something about him I could not understand.

1ST COMMISSIONER. Which death will simplify.

2ND COMMISSIONER. Yes ? Will it ? Who knows ?

[*The JAILOR reappears and beckons XANTIPPE and the children to enter.*

XANTIPPE (*running across*). Oh ! Socrates ! Socrates !

[*The COMMISSIONERS move to the other door.*

1ST COMMISSIONER [*opening it*]. See : yonder are his friends waiting. Let us go.

[*They pass through into the outer corridor, where the DISCIPLES OF SOCRATES have begun gradually to assemble. The JAILOR reappears, and follows them to the door. Frigidly regarded by the DISCIPLES, the COMMISSIONERS depart.*

PHAEDO [*to the JAILOR*]. May we come in now ?

JAILOR. Socrates asks you to wait a little. His wife and children are with him. When he is ready I will let you know.

[*The DISCIPLES dispose themselves patiently. All are silent and dejected. As the JAILOR returns to the inner corridor the voice of XANTIPPE is heard.*

XANTIPPE. And I a poor widow !

[*SOCRATES returns, accompanied by his family. The ARMOURER crosses the inner corridor*

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carrying hammer and chains. The JAILOR retires to the inner corridor.

SOCRATES. Indeed, wife, my death and the manner of it are rather fortunate to you than otherwise. For I have many friends who think they owe me a kindness, and they will take care of both you and my children better than I should have done.

XANTIPPE. But that will never be the same !

SOCRATES. No, my dear ; nor should I have been the same to-morrow as I was yesterday.

XANTIPPE. Oh, how can I bear to think of it ! Strangers !

SOCRATES. You used to complain, my dear wife, that I was so much a stranger—always gadding about. And even when I was at home you used to say you could never understand me. You will understand these better.

XANTIPPE. I won't ! I won't ! I don't want to understand them. I never have understood anything—how I ever came to marry you : how we ever came to have children !

SOCRATES. No, my dear ; that is indeed a great mystery. But on that matter you understand as much as I do : more—for in the process of gestation a woman's experience goes further than a man's. It means more to her.

XANTIPPE. It means nothing ! Only pain, pain, pain !

SOCRATES. Well, pain is a teacher. And you have endured more of his teaching than I have. You used to say I didn't respect you. But I do, my dear, in those matters where you have had more experience. Also our children love you better than they

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love me. That is your right, and where you have the advantage.

XANTIPPE. What advantage now, when every one will point at them and say their father was a criminal?

SOCRATES. No, my dear; not a criminal, only a dangerous man.

XANTIPPE. Yes; I say a criminal.

SOCRATES. Indeed, I think, had you been on the jury you would have voted for my death. Well, wife, at last I am going to please you; for I could have escaped death had I accepted a certain offer that was made to me.

XANTIPPE. You never had any sense—that I could discover!

SOCRATES. Then, my dear, I will reveal it to you now. In all our life together have I ever reproached you?

XANTIPPE. You never had any cause!

SOCRATES. Or beaten you—believing I had cause?

XANTIPPE [*grudgingly*]. You have not beaten me.

SOCRATES. Then, in either case, that was sensible of me; for either you were blameless, or else you were unteachable. Choose which of the two explanations you prefer; but in either case grant that I showed sense.

XANTIPPE. Socrates, you are heartless.

SOCRATES. My dear wife, you will soon have to go; and I wish to send you away satisfied. How much better for you to go feeling that I have got what I deserved, than that I was the victim of injustice! For a man so evil as to be heartless, my penalty is a

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light one. Go, then, my dear ; and let your complaint continue to be that I never knew how good a wife Heaven had bestowed on me.

XANTIPPE. You never did !

SOCRATES. As I say, my dear.

XANTIPPE. Never !

SOCRATES. Never. So now I am going to ask you to do me a kindness. These two of our children are still young ; and though they hear us now, they understand little of what we are saying, and will remember less. But it will, on the whole, be to their happiness if they are allowed to think that I was a good father to them, or at least not so bad as you yourself held me to be. And as my friends, in whose charge I leave you, will often tell them that I was not altogether unworthy to be their father, I ask you then to keep silence about the faults which you saw in me—the more so as then they will have ceased to cause you annoyance. . . . I judge by your silence (that rare gift which you have so seldom bestowed on me) that my request is granted. Believe me, I am grateful. And now, wife, since all unpleasantness between us is so soon to be over, and in order that our last moments together may be as happy as possible, I wish to praise you for the part you played in the life we have shared. Though I may have seemed indifferent and unresponsive to your care for me, I have not been unobservant. I have marked your industry and your thrift ; also your ingenuity in contriving to make much of the little with which I provided you. Your management has been wonderful. I know, too, with what joy you constantly got the better of a bargain—

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wherein no trader that I ever met could stand against you. You kept a clean house, and made servants obedient ; and if any of them were able to rob you I never knew of it. Therefore to me it remains true that as you, who had the care of my money, were never robbed, I was never defrauded. Nor did you ever complain of having children, in spite of the pain that it caused you ; and though you sometimes complained of having a husband, I know you would have complained much more had you been forced to bear children to one who was not your husband. For all these things I commend you as a good helpmate ; and in leaving to you the care of my children, I do so with confidence that your good qualities will not be less when I am gone than they were when you had the additional trouble of me. Farewell, Xantippe ! If the consciousness of virtue can keep any one happy, your lot will never be a miserable one.

XANTIPPE. Socrates, you break my heart.

SOCRATES. You flatter me ! I have not the power.

XANTIPPE. You hate me ! You hate me !

SOCRATES. Far from it.

XANTIPPE. You are glad to be rid of me ! You said yourself you had the chance of escape. You are dying to get quit of me ! You have no other reason. What other reason have you ?

SOCRATES. I cannot tell you my reason, my dear ; for you would not understand it.

XANTIPPE. I do not understand why you should want to be rid of me ! So it's true !

[*The JAILOR looks in inquiringly.*

SOCRATES. Ah, my friends ! I was forgetting

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them. [*To the JAILOR.*] Tell them to come in. My dear, I think you had better go, and come back again presently. You are making the children cry.

XANTIPPE. Why shouldn't they cry ?

[*The JAILOR goes to call in the DISCIPLES.*

SOCRATES. They have been crying too much already. Come, Timocles, take this and dry your mother's eyes for her. That's right. Now his ; now your own. See how simple and easy is a good action ! Now we are all happy again ; and look, yonder, how brightly the sun is shining.

[*He goes into the inner corridor followed by*

XANTIPPE and the children. *Through the door on the left the DISCIPLES begin to enter.*

SOCRATES *looks out to right.*

And there is a door open, and outside stands a tree. You see it ?

TIMOCLES. Yes, father !

SOCRATES. And you ?—the tree standing all by itself ?

PANTARKES. Yes, yes. I see it, father !

SOCRATES. Well, run ! And see which can get there first. [*The children run off.*] There go your children, my dear ; and one has fallen. Better run after them !

XANTIPPE [*flinging herself upon him*]. Socrates ! Socrates !

SOCRATES. Yes, my dear ; yes. Come again presently.

XANTIPPE. O God ! [*She beats against the wall.*

[*SOCRATES stands looking at her.*

CRITO. May we all come in, Socrates ?

SOCRATES. Yes, yes ; come in ! Crito, find some one to take her home, and look after her.

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XANTIPPE. Oh ! It 's the last time, the last time !
None of you will ever see him again ; ever——

[CRITO leads her out. SOCRATES moves to the couch, sits down on it, and begins rubbing his legs, while his DISCIPLES dispose themselves in groups round him.

SOCRATES. How curious is the thing we call pleasure, and how like to pain ! Though one might think they were opposites, since we never have both at once. Yet he who pursues the one generally comes on the other also. They are both separate and united.

APOLLODORUS. Please explain that, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Why, had Aesop thought of it, Apollodorus, he might have made a fable of it : how the Gods, trying to get them to agree, and being unable, joined them head to tail ; so when the one comes the other always follows. That is the case now. The pain in my legs, which my chains caused me, is now turning to pleasure.

CEBES. Aesop, you say ? Evenus told me yesterday—and wants to know why, since you never wrote poetry before—that here in prison you have been turning Aesop's fables into verse, and making hymns to Apollo.

SOCRATES. You can tell him, Cebes, that I am not trying to rival him : that I should find too difficult. But I wanted to put myself right with regard to a dream which has come to me at intervals of my life that I was to be a composer of harmony. At first I thought that must mean philosophy ; but as I was already doing that to the best of my ability, while the dream kept repeating itself, it seemed so like the

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silly cries of spectators at the races—who tell a man to run when he is running—that at last, out of respect for my dream, I decided to act on it, and write a little poetry before my departure.

So, to begin with, this being his feast, I composed a hymn to Apollo ; and then, as I have no invention of my own, I took Aesop and turned him into verse. And so, Cebes, give Evenus my greetings, and tell him, as he is a wise man, to come after me as quickly as he can. For to-day, it seems, I shall be going, as the Athenians have decided for me.

CEBES. Evenus won't thank you for such a message as that, Socrates : not if I know him !

SOCRATES. Why ? Is not Evenus a philosopher ?

SIMMIAS. He likes to think so.

[This remark helps some of the sad DISCIPLES to smile. CRITO returns.]

SOCRATES. Well, any man who is philosophic would surely be willing to die, so long as he did not take his own life.

CEBES. Why, if a man should be willing to die, may he not take his own ?

SOCRATES. It seems a contradiction, does it not, to say that a man were better dead, yet must not be his own benefactor ?

CEBES. It does, indeed ! To do what is good for oneself seems only natural.

SOCRATES. But how, if a man truly does not belong to himself ? Has a prisoner the right to open the door and run away ? *[Then, with a touch of mischief.]* Has he, Crito ?

CRITO. Go on, Socrates.

SOCRATES. And are not the Gods—no, I will not

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say 'our jailors,' but our guardians? Do we not belong to them?

CEBES. Yes, yes; I suppose so.

SOCRATES. And if one of you had an ox or an ass which tried to make away with itself, without having first asked your leave, would you not blame it on the beast, and punish it?

CEBES. Yes, Socrates; but if God is my guardian, and I belong to him, and live to do him service, why should I want to die, and so leave off serving one much better than myself? Surely it's the fool who will want to die and run away; but the wise man will want to remain.

[This argument rouses hopeful expectancy in some of the DISCIPLES, but not in CRITO, who now knows better.]

SOCRATES. Now there speaks a man of honest mind, who isn't contented with the first thing you tell him!

SIMMIAS. And I think his argument has something in it, Socrates. For what does your wise man mean, running away from one who is better than himself? When Cebes says that, he means *you*! He thinks you are too ready to leave—not us so much, as the Gods who are your masters.

HERMOGENES. Yes, and many of us think the same.

SOCRATES. There is certainly reason in what you say. So, I am to be tried again? And you are my judges? And you expect me to answer you?

[At this point a PRISON ATTENDANT enters and beckons to CRITO, who goes to speak with him.]

SIMMIAS. We would like to have it answered, Socrates.

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SOCRATES. Well, let us hope I make a more successful defence before you than I did before my other judges ! Though—if I fail—to what further punishment you can condemn me, I do not know. But I quite agree, Cebes, that death ought to grieve me, were I not as sure as one can be in such matters that the other Gods to whom I go are wise and good also ; and—though of this I am a little less sure—that I shall find myself in a better world. So, having this good hope, I do well not to grieve.

SIMMIAS. Still, though so ready to be gone yourself, you might leave some of your thoughts behind ; for they were always worth having.

SOCRATES. I am at your service. But what is Crito waiting to say ?

CRITO. Only this, Socrates. The attendant who is to bring you the poison says you must not talk too much, because excitement and talking hinder it from acting, making two or even three doses necessary.

SOCRATES. Then tell him to mind his own business, and be ready to give the three doses if necessary. Besides, I am not going to excite myself.

CRITO. I knew that was what you would say ; but I had to satisfy him.

SOCRATES. Was that necessary ? It is far more necessary that I should satisfy all of you.

[There is a slight movement among the DISCIPLES, as they await the beginning of the argument.]

So now I must prove to my judges why the true philosopher has reason for dying cheerfully, and for

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expecting to find his greatest good in the other world? But is not your true philosopher always pursuing death, and desiring it? And if that be so, why should he complain when that which he has been running after all his life turns round and catches him?

SIMMIAS. I don't feel much like laughing, Socrates; but you make me. For many would say that you have now truly described the life of a philosopher—that it is no better than death, and that death is all he deserves.

SOCRATES. Let us leave the many to their own opinions, Simmias, and discover our own. And if you will come round me, my friends, so that I may not by talking too loud excite myself and prevent the poison from acting properly, we will go into this whole question of the relations of life and death, about which—though we experience both—we seem to know so little. . . . Do you believe, Simmias, that there is such a thing as death?

SIMMIAS. Why, surely!

SOCRATES. And what is it, then, if not the separation of body and soul?

SIMMIAS. That is what it appears to be.

SOCRATES. And thereupon, while the body remains, the soul disappears.

SIMMIAS. Quite.

SOCRATES. Now until that happens, what has your philosopher been doing with them: cultivating the body, or cultivating the soul? To which has he been devoting his attention?

SIMMIAS. To the soul, Socrates.

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SOCRATES. And so, rejecting the pleasure of eating and drinking, and the interests of the body, he has cared only for the interests of the soul.

SIMMIAS. True.

SOCRATES. Trying all he knows how to separate soul from body.

SIMMIAS. Yes ?

SOCRATES. But the many, who hold the contrary opinion that only the body is worth cultivating, regard such a life as no better than death, and would rather die than endure it.

SIMMIAS. They would say so, Socrates.

SOCRATES. So your true philosopher has never cared much for the body, from which death comes to separate him.

SIMMIAS. No.

SOCRATES. And the body has been the obstacle. . . . Then, what about knowledge ? In that has the body helped, or hindered ?

SIMMIAS. It may have done both.

SOCRATES. Nay ; but I mean, are our senses such sure guides that they can show us things as they really are, or only as they seem ?

SIMMIAS. Only as they seem.

SOCRATES. And that is not the same thing, is it, Simmias ?

SIMMIAS. By no means.

SOCRATES. So true life is best revealed, not by the senses but by thought.

SIMMIAS. We think so.

SOCRATES. For the mind thinks best left to itself, when the senses do not trouble it.

SIMMIAS. Usually.

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EUCLEIDES. Always. But Simmias tries never to admit anything.

APOLLODORUS. No ; if you tell him of a cow with four legs, he will only say it is possible.

AESCHINES. Apollodorus, don't chatter. Please go on, Socrates.

SOCRATES. And to the philosopher, thought is all that makes life worth having.

SIMMIAS. Yes.

SOCRATES. So here again you have him dishonouring the body and running away from it.

SIMMIAS. As far as he can do so—without dying.

SOCRATES. And why *does* he do so, Simmias ?

SIMMIAS. I am waiting to hear.

SOCRATES. Is it not because he believes that real things are absolute ? That there is absolute truth, absolute beauty, absolute justice ; and that these comprise an absolute good to which his mind is eternally attracted.

SIMMIAS. I suppose it is that, Socrates.

SOCRATES. But did he—or did you—ever behold any of these with your eyes, or come within reach of them by any of your senses ?

SIMMIAS. No ; never.

SOCRATES. Therefore that which he most desires and most surely believes, his body hinders—depriving him of them.

SIMMIAS. What you say is curiously true, Socrates.

SOCRATES. And so—taught by experience—will not the philosopher be inclined to say that thought has led him to this conclusion—that while we are in the body, and while our souls are in contact with the evils of the body, we shall never gain our goal, which

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is truth. For he will trace to the body all the diseases from which men suffer—the passions, the cravings, the fears, the fancies, the endless foolishness ; the wars also, and strife, and division. And he will see that to have any pure knowledge, he must be out of the body, or able to forget it. And so he, being in pursuit of pure knowledge, must come inevitably to one of two conclusions : either true knowledge is unattainable, or, if at all, only after we are dead. These are the things, Simmias, which all true lovers of knowledge must either say or think. Do you not agree ?

SIMMIAS. I think I do, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then, my friend, if this be true, have I not good reason to hope that going where I do now, I shall find that waiting at the finish for which all my life I have searched ?—therefore, must go rejoicing ?

SIMMIAS [*concedingly*]. Yes,—yes, Socrates.

SOCRATES. So when, on the contrary, you see a man fearful at the approach of death, is not his reluctance proof that he is no lover of wisdom, but of the body rather—probably also of money, or power ?

SIMMIAS. One would conclude so.

SOCRATES. And even in virtue, Simmias, there is deceit, except for the philosopher. Take courage, for instance. Why do courageous men face death ? Only because they fear some greater evil which the avoidance of death would bring on them. Therefore many a man through fear has taken his own life. But your true philosopher fears neither life nor death, and being in God's hand abides his will.

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And so it is with other virtues, when the fear of losing one pleasure drives them to give up another. But is this barter and exchange which they practise true virtue ? O beloved Simmias, is there not one true coin which is too precious for exchange ? And is not this wisdom ? And to that one substance which alone is prized by all who love truth, is not everything else like shadow ? To be one of whose lovers all my life I have striven. Whether I strove rightly or no, whether or no I have succeeded, soon shall I learn, when I am come to the other side : if it be the will of God.

[While he is so speaking the PRISON ATTENDANT has come to the fountain in the outer corridor, bringing with him the utensils necessary for the preparation of the poison, and stands waiting. To him enters the JAILOR followed by a SERVANT, and with a certain amount of official ceremony hands him the exact measure of hemlock prescribed by law. The JAILOR sees it placed under the strainer of the larger vessel, which is then closed, and the ATTENDANT, after crushing, pours in water and sets the poison to strain. All this is done slowly and in silence.]

SOCRATES. And so, Simmias and Cebes, am I not right neither to complain or be grieved at parting from these, my fellows, and those whom I worship in this world, since I believe I shall find as good or better in the world to which I go ? But most men do not believe this ; so if now I have succeeded in convincing you, I have made a better defence here than I did in Athens.

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CEBES. I think that, in the main, you are right, Socrates. But as regards the soul, men are sorely in doubt, fearing that when she has left the body she is nowhere : that death is the end of her : that going forth she is dispersed like smoke on air, and so passes and becomes nothing. If she remained herself after release from the evils of the body, there would be good reason to hope that what you say is true. But it will need no little argument to show that after death the soul still exists.

SOCRATES. Very true, Cebes. Shall we talk this out ?

CEBES. By all means, Socrates, for we all long to know what you think about it.

SOCRATES. Well, I have at least this advantage, that no enemy would say I am talking now about what does not concern me. So let me collect my thoughts ; then we will go into this question.

[He sits pondering, with his DISCIPLES all still and silent around him. Outside the ATTENDANT has finished his preliminary operations.]

ATTENDANT. For what hour, sir, has this to be ready ?

JAILOR. Have it ready by noon. Then I will come and call you.

ATTENDANT. Pity he should die, sir.

JAILOR. We here must not concern ourselves with pity. We only do our duty.

ATTENDANT. And that 's a pity too, sir ; isn't it ?

JAILOR *[abruptly]*. Go on, and be ready ! . . .
[Then, conceding the answer.] Yes.

[He goes out. The ATTENDANT remains.]

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From this point to page 34 the Dialogue may, for acting purposes, be omitted: the scene closing and opening again as for a second act.

* * * * *

SOCRATES. Considering this question, whether the souls of men do, or do not, exist in the next world, we must bear in mind the belief long held that those who go to the other world come back to be born again.

CEBES. If it be true, you mean ?

SOCRATES. And then—what follows ? For if the living arrive from the dead, then souls must exist in the other world, else they could not be born again. So, if there is real proof that the living are born from the dead, that will meet the case. If not, we must find other arguments.

CEBES. Yes ; go on, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then we had better consider the whole question, not only in relation to man, but to animals and plants, and everything that generates. And have we not, throughout nature, the spectacle of things brought into being by their opposites ?

CEBES. How so, Socrates ?

SOCRATES. I mean that, wherever there are opposites, there is alternation. Good becomes manifest through evil, justice through injustice ; the greater is only the greater because of the less. Nor can there be increase without diminution, or growth without decay.

CEBES. True.

SOCRATES. So in other cases : separation and unity, heat and cold. These are opposites, yet have part one with another.

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CEBES. Yes ? Well ?

SOCRATES. And as sleeping is the opposite of waking, is there not also an opposite of life ?

CEBES. Quite true.

SOCRATES. What is it ?

CEBES. Death.

SOCRATES. Then—if life and death are opposites—they are generated the one from the other, and have also their go-betweens.

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. So here are sleeping and waking—two opposites ; and out of sleeping comes waking, and out of waking sleeping. And the go-between in the one case is the falling asleep, in the other the awakening.

CEBES. That is so.

SOCRATES. Now I want you to compare life and death for me in the same way. Death is opposed to life ?

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And they are generated the one from the other ?

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. From the living—what ?

CEBES. The dead.

SOCRATES. From the dead ?

CEBES. The living.

SOCRATES. It follows, then, that in the world below the souls exist.

CEBES. It follows, on those premises.

SOCRATES. And of these two forms of generation one at least is certain—since dying is certain ?

CEBES. Yes.

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SOCRATES. Then are we to exclude the other, merely because we do not see it?

CEBES. What other?

SOCRATES. The generation of the dead back into life, through the process of birth. Is nature so one-sided?

CEBES. It were hard to think so.

SOCRATES. Therefore the return to life seems wholly reasonable, and what one would expect.

CEBES. Yes: all this seems to come logically from the premises.

SOCRATES. And that these were not against reason, I think I can prove. For if all things which had life were to die and remain dead, what at last would happen? Would not all finally be absorbed in death, leaving nothing from which life could generate?

CEBES. That would follow. But that concerns only the material world.

SOCRATES. But it is accepted and you yourself believe—that knowledge is recollection. Yet we know more than we have recollected in this life. So here also the contention is borne out that the soul has had a previous existence.

SIMMIAS. But how do you show that we know more than our present recollections can account for?

SOCRATES. Accepting, that is to say, that knowledge *is* recollection?

SIMMIAS. Yes. I am not questioning that.

SOCRATES. Your question is, then, whether all our knowledge comes from recollection in this life, or partly from recollection of some other?

SIMMIAS. That is the question.

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SOCRATES. Let us, then, take an instance—of knowledge and of recollection. A lover sees a musical instrument, or a garment belonging to the one he loves. And immediately his thought goes from the instrument, or the garment, to the beloved—though he be absent. And it is often the same when the beauty which is absent is a more abstract kind—something which, in this life, we have never encountered.

SIMMIAS. Give me an instance, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Why, when I, or any one else, look at something whose form aims at a perfection of which it falls short, and which in this life it can never attain—does not that presume knowledge or recollection of the unattainable standard at which the object imperfectly aims?

SIMMIAS. Yes.

SOCRATES. Thus, though I have never seen perfection, I conceive that perfection exists; and though I have never seen any two things absolutely equal, I can conceive absolute equality.

SIMMIAS. To be sure!

SOCRATES. Therefore it follows, as I cannot find them here, that I must have known and met perfection and equality elsewhere. Yet it is only through our senses that we become aware of such equality as in this world exists, or, further, are able to perceive that things apparently equal fall short of the absolute equality which here is never found.

SIMMIAS. All that follows.

SOCRATES. Then, before we began to see, or hear, or perceive in any way, we must have had knowledge of absolute equality; else we could not have

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compared to that standard things which to our senses seem equal.

SIMMIAS. No.

SOCRATES. Then we must have got our knowledge of equality at some previous time.

SIMMIAS. True.

SOCRATES. And not of equality only ; for we have the same knowledge about other things—and not of things material, the greater and the less, but of ideas also : beauty, goodness, justice, holiness, and all that seems to have within it the call to perfection. And this power of appreciation we surely acquired before birth, since nothing exists here to give us knowledge of it.

SIMMIAS. I agree, Socrates. And yet, when a man is born, is he not far more possessed of ignorance than of knowledge ; and would it not be true to say that he has forgotten everything, rather than that he recollects anything ?

SOCRATES. It would, Simmias. Yet what is forgetting but loss of knowledge ?

SIMMIAS. Quite true.

SOCRATES. But suppose we lost knowledge at birth, yet afterwards recovered it by the operation of the senses, is not learning the natural recovery of what was already ours ? And is not this rightly called recollection ?

SIMMIAS. You make a good case for it, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then our souls must have existed without bodies before birth, and must have had intelligence.

SIMMIAS. Unless we received this knowledge at the very moment of birth.

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SOCRATES. And at the very same moment lost it again ? For certainly we had no recollection of it, then. Or does the loss come later ?

SIMMIAS. No, Socrates ; I was talking nonsense.

EUCLEIDES. How curiously wise Simmias is sometimes !

SOCRATES. Then may we not believe, Simmias, that if there is an absolute form of goodness and beauty underlying all things, to which we refer and compare all objects of sense, having these ideas as a pre-existent possession, then our souls also must have had pre-existence. And the proof that these ideas existed before we were born is the same as that our souls did : and if not the ideas, then not the souls either. But can you give up the belief that truth and goodness and beauty do actually exist ; or do they only seem ?

SIMMIAS. No ; I cannot. I am satisfied with the proof, Socrates.

SOCRATES. But is Cebes satisfied ?

SIMMIAS. Though he is most sceptical of argument, he should be satisfied. If not, it is mere obstinacy. Yes, you have satisfied us that the soul exists before birth. But I have still the common fear of which Cebes spoke, that after death the soul will dissolve and become nothing.

CEBES. You are right, Simmias ; the half has been proved to us, but not the whole. That the soul existed before birth is one thing ; that it will continue to exist after death is quite another.

SOCRATES. But if you put both arguments together—this and the former one, in which it was agreed that all life is born of death, is not the whole

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case proved ? . . . Well, I see that you and Simmias would like to pursue the argument further. Like children you are dogged by the fear that when the soul leaves the body the wind will take and scatter it—especially if a man dies when the wind happens to be strong.

CEBES. Then, Father Socrates, you must charm our fears out of us. Yet perhaps they are not ours, but those of the child that is in each one of us, to whom death is a sort of ogre, waiting for him in the dark.

SOCRATES. The child only needs a little daily teaching, and the fear vanishes.

CEBES. But where shall we find our teacher when you are gone, Socrates ?

SOCRATES. There are as big fish in the rivers of Hellas as ever came out of them, Cebes. Search, and you will find !

CEBES. The search shall be made, Socrates. But meanwhile—you being still with us, will you not, please——

SOCRATES. Your pleasure is mine. . . . So, first let us ask ourselves what is that which we fear is going to be scattered ? Have we reason to think that it is of a dispersable nature ?—for some things are, and some are not. When we talk of the essence of things, or of the absolute—of beauty, equality, truth, are these things which are liable to change, and therefore to dispersal, or are they always the same ?

CEBES. Always the same.

SOCRATES. But when you come to their many instances—things with beauty, or with a common

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likeness to one another—youth, horses, fine raiment : though you call them beautiful or equal, yet you know that all these are changeable.

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And these are the things which we can touch and see ; whereas the others, which are unchangeable, remain invisible.

CEBES. Quite true.

SOCRATES. Now let us take it that there are two forms of existence—the visible, and the invisible.

CEBES. We will.

SOCRATES. And the visible is the changing, and the invisible the unchanging.

CEBES. That also—as an assumption.

SOCRATES. Nay, have we not, as a demonstrable fact, such parts to our existence—one part body, the other part mind or soul ?

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And the body, which we see, is always changing.

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And the soul, which we do not see—how are we to know whether that also is not changeable ?

CEBES. How, indeed, Socrates ?

SOCRATES. Have we not already agreed that when the soul trusts herself to the perception of the senses, and following these accepts guidance of the body, she is dragged this way and that, and staggers like a man full of wine ?

CEBES. We did : I remember.

SOCRATES. Being then under the influence of that which changes,

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CEBES. Even so.

SOCRATES. Whereas, when she retires into herself, she comes to a region of pure thought and meditation ; and finding herself there among her own kin, she is serene and no longer under contrary influences, having for her foundation that which does not change ?

CEBES. All that is true.

SOCRATES. So is not the soul, by what we already know of it, shown to be of a less changeable nature than the body ?

CEBES. Indeed, yes.

SOCRATES. And therefore, would one not say, less subject to change—more especially when it is set free from the body ?

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. Then consider the matter in another way : when the soul and body are together, is it not in the natural order for the soul to command, and for the body to obey ?

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And which of these two comes nearer to the divine—rule or obedience ?

CEBES. Surely rule, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then does not the soul, being the ruler, more truly resemble the divine ?

CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And is not the divine also unchangeable ?

CEBES. Necessarily.

SOCRATES. So, in all ways, the soul is nearer to the divine than the body—and therefore is more unchangeable.

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CEBES. Yes.

SOCRATES. And are we to believe that that position of affairs will be reversed after death ?

CEBES. That is hardly likely.

SOCRATES. No. For even in life, have we not seen that, as the soul withdraws herself from dependence on the pleasures of sense, she becomes more self-possessed, more serene, more unchangeable ; and, in partaking of the nature of those things to which she inclines, finds release from those other things—the desires and pains and fears of this world—which are changeable ? Therefore the soul of the true philosopher has no shrinking from this release, but finds it right. For thus he escapes the greatest evil of all.

CEBES. What is that, Socrates ?

SOCRATES. This, Cebes : that when the sense of pleasure or pain is most vehement, the soul is apt to believe that the objects which cause it are also the most real. But this cannot be true, since they come only of the senses.

CEBES. No ; clearly.

SOCRATES. Therefore this is the state in which the soul is most bound by the body. Since every pleasure and pain is like a nail which nails soul and body together, making the soul to become like the body, and believe that what the body tells her is true. And so, letting go her true heritage, she accepts what the body offers instead.

CEBES. You are right, Socrates.

* * * * *

[*All this time the ATTENDANT has sat watching the straining of the poison, occasionally tilting the bowl to see how the process is getting on.*

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Now, as Socrates continues speaking, he rises, and mounting the step of the fountain stands under the window to listen. After having listened for a while he steps down dejectedly, takes the bowl from under the strainer and decants its contents into another vessel which he has ready. He empties the strainer, and throws away the refuse. Then having rinsed the bowl and strainer he takes up the newly filled vessel and prepares to go.

SOCRATES. And that, Cebes, is why true lovers of knowledge are temperate and brave, and for no other reason. The soul does not expect philosophy to release her from one set of pains and pleasures so that she may give herself up to another—unweaving her web, like Penelope, only to weave it again ; but she seeks always the life which is truly hers, free from the variations and changes of the body, finding her best nourishment in the true and the divine, wherein is no change or shadow of turning. Do not fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a soul so nurtured and set to such a goal will, at her severance from the body, be broken and blown away by the wind, passing no-whither and becoming nothing.

[As SOCRATES concludes, some of his DISCIPLES gather round him ; PHAEDO, by gesture, inviting him to rest. Meanwhile SIMMIAS and CEBES confer apart.]

CEBES. Socrates has spoken well, Simmias.

SIMMIAS. He always does, Cebes.

CEBES. Are you satisfied ?

SIMMIAS. No ; but I will not tell him so.

CEBES. Why not, Simmias ?

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SIMMIAS. Because *he* is satisfied ; and this is his last hour.

CEBES [*sighing*]. You are right, Simmias.

SOCRATES [*affectionately rejecting the efforts of PHAEDO to make him lie down*]. What are you two talking about ? Is there anything yet wanting to the argument ? Or have you something still better to say on the other side ?

SIMMIAS. I confess, Socrates, that I still have doubts and questions, which I might have put at some other time—but not now.

SOCRATES. Why not now, Simmias ? [*A pause. SIMMIAS does not answer.*] Oh ! Am I, then, likely to convince any one of my argument if I cannot even persuade you that I feel no worse off now than at any other time ? Surely, if the swans, sacred to Apollo, sing as they depart from life, must not I—if I have in me the voice of true philosophy—sing no less merrily than they ? Speak ; what have you to say ?

SIMMIAS. Very well, Socrates ; I will tell you. I feel that it is very hard—almost impossible—even though the argument may seem sound, to be sure about such things as these in our present life. All we can do is to consider every point, every difficulty, and only when we have examined every one, accept—though even then it will be a risk—the best conclusion to which fearless inquiry has brought us. And so, as you bid me, I say that I do not think all the difficulties have been met.

SOCRATES. In what way, Simmias, is the argument wanting ?

SIMMIAS. It's like this, Socrates : supposing one used the same argument about music—about har-

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mony and the instrument : might one not say that harmony is invisible, incorporate, perfect, and divine, existing in the lyre which is tuned to give it expression, while the lyre and the strings are material, of earthly composition, and destined to decay ? And suppose some one broke the lyre or severed the strings, then one might argue as you do—that the harmony lives on and has not perished. And one would not allow that the broken lyre and the broken strings, which are mortal by nature, could remain while the harmony, which is heavenly and immortal in its nature, had perished even sooner than they. The harmony, one would say, must be somewhere : the wood and the strings must decay before anything happened to that.

So, if any one chooses to maintain that the soul, being the harmony of its instrument, perishes first in death, how is one to answer him ?

[The argument of SIMMIAS has a depressing effect on the DISCIPLES ; some bow their heads in dejection, others look anxiously at SOCRATES, fearful of his inability to meet the objection. SOCRATES alone remains cheerful and confident.]

SOCRATES. Simmias's objection is a fair one. And you agree with him, Cebes ?

CEBES. Yes, I do, Socrates.

SOCRATES. And is there no one here ready to answer him better than I can ? For he has made a shrewd hit at me. . . . So ? Will no one take up the argument for me when I am dead ?

PHAEDO. Speak, Socrates ! For you are still with us.

[So saying, PHAEDO goes and sits at his feet.]

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SOCRATES *bends affectionately over him and begins playing with his hair.*

SOCRATES. To-morrow, Phaedo, I suppose these beautiful locks will all be cut off ?

PHAEDO [*sorrowfully*]. Yes, I suppose so.

SOCRATES. Not if you take *my* advice ! Why go into mourning for a friend who is still living ? But were I robbed of that hope by the argument we have just listened to, then—were I you—I would indeed cut them off, nor ever grow them again, till I had once more established my case. Do not sacrifice these to the dead unless I fail of my proof that nothing is dead—except the body which is left behind.

[PHAEDO *bows his head under SOCRATES' hand, saying nothing. With his hand still resting upon it, SOCRATES begins speaking.*

And now, my friends, I perceive that you are all cast down, because the argument seems to have gone against me. But our case would be more unhappy still—there being such a thing as truth—if, having lighted on an argument which at first seemed true and then turned out to be faulty, we, instead of blaming ourselves, were either to reject philosophy and lose faith in it, or despair of ever finding it.

[*So saying, he raises PHAEDO'S head and looks at him inquiringly.*

PHAEDO. That would be sad indeed, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Yes ; for this failure to reach the right conclusion is not in philosophy but in ourselves. And I find that I myself am, at this moment, tempted to turn from philosophy and become a special pleader, one who is less anxious to get at the truth than to persuade people by the plausibility of his

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arguments. And the main difference between us is merely this : that while he wishes to persuade others, I only wish to persuade myself ; for, in a short time, whether I have satisfied you or not is going to matter very little to *me*. All the same, if I have to give up my belief in a future life between now and then, and admit ignorance, I shall not in the brief time that remains distress my friends with lamentation ; for my ignorance will not last long, and will die with me. So all I ask of you now is this : think of the truth, not of Socrates. And if I seem to speak truth, then agree with me ; but if not, oppose me with all your strength, lest I deceive you as well as myself, and die like a bee—leaving my sting in you !

So now, Cebes ! You and Simmias agree, do you not, with that part of the argument which maintains that the soul existed before the body ; but not with that part which maintains that it outlives the body ?

CEBES. That is my position, Socrates.

SIMMIAS. Mine also. Nor do I feel that I can ever change it.

SOCRATES. But you will have to change it, my friend, if you base your belief on the theory that harmony is a compound, and the soul a harmony made out of those strings called the senses, in their framework the body. Do you imagine a harmony can pre-exist the elements which compose it ?

SIMMIAS. Certainly not, Socrates.

SOCRATES. But that is exactly what you do imagine, if you say the soul existed before taking bodily form, and so was made of elements which did not then exist. But harmony's conditions are different : for first comes the lyre with its strings,

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fixed to scale and waiting to sound ; and to them last of all comes harmony, and is the first to perish. So this theory of the soul is quite different from the one which we accepted ?

SIMMIAS. It certainly differs.

SOCRATES. And can these two theories both be true ?

SIMMIAS. I might say it was possible, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then do. But surely harmony should exist in an argument which has harmony for its subject !

SIMMIAS. Yes.

SOCRATES. But in these two propositions there is none. For put it thus : Can a harmony or any other composition be independent of the elements which compose it ?

SIMMIAS. That is impossible.

SOCRATES. Or do, or undergo anything which they do not ?

SIMMIAS. No.

SOCRATES. Then a harmony does not set the pace to the elements of which it is composed, but follows them.

SIMMIAS. True.

SOCRATES. For does not the very nature of every harmony depend upon the key and scale of its elements—so that you have more of a harmony or less, according to the tuning of the instrument ?

SIMMIAS. That is so.

SOCRATES. But is it so with the soul ? Does a soul exist only according to scale ?

SIMMIAS. No, no, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Yet surely one soul may be said to

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have virtue and intelligence, and to be good ; and another to have folly and vice, and to be evil.

SIMMIAS. Yes, to be sure.

SOCRATES. And if the soul were a harmony, then, according to the scale of its virtue, it would become more of a soul, and according to the scale of its vice it would become less. And as harmony can degenerate into discord, so that no harmony is left, so the soul degenerating into vice would become no soul at all.

SIMMIAS. That follows, certainly.

SOCRATES. But this is a new doctrine altogether, Simmias. Do you hold with it ?

SIMMIAS. No, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then put it the other way—for one or other must follow—if the soul is the harmony of the body, and if every soul is equally existent, then they are all of equal harmony and all equally good. But do you hold that, Simmias ?

SIMMIAS. No, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Let us take another point then. If the soul, like harmony, drew its composition from the body, would not the soul and the body agree ? And would not the affections of the soul be the same as the affections of the body ?

SIMMIAS. Yes.

SOCRATES. But are they ?

SIMMIAS. How are they not ? For example ?

SOCRATES. Why, when the body is hot and thirsty, may not the soul, for reasons of its own, keep us from drinking, or when hungry from eating ? And this is but one instance out of thousands of the opposition of the soul to the desires of the body.

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But if the soul is the harmony of the body, how can such a discord come about ?

SIMMIAS. How indeed, Socrates ?

SOCRATES. The theory is yours, Simmias, not mine. I ask *you*.

SIMMIAS. I give it up, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then so do we all. Is there any other point, Simmias, or Cebes, on which the argument seems lacking ?

CEBES. None, Socrates.

SIMMIAS. No, I have no more to say, Socrates ; at least, no reasons that I can urge. But I still feel, and cannot but feel, uncertain in my own mind, when I consider the greatness of the subject and the feebleness of man.

SOCRATES. That is well said, Simmias. So, at the start, it is always well to begin slowly—one step at a time ; till, as you go further, you find reason added to reason more than you ever hoped ; and so, advancing with considered confidence, you discover at last that all reason is upon your side, and the inquiry is over.

CRITO. This inquiry is, indeed, Socrates—thanks to you.

SOCRATES. Then, my friends, if the soul be really immortal, what care must we take of her, not only for this life but for eternity. If death were the end, the wicked would have a better reward in dying than the just and virtuous ; for death would rid them not only of their bodies, but of the evil which was in their souls. But now, seeing that the soul is immortal, there is no escape from evil, except we attain virtue. Through death we pass to judg-

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ment. If we have done ill, the ill we have done finds us out ; if we have done well, the good is still with us. Brothers, life is wonderful ! and the world is full of it : other worlds also, regions into which some day we may enter.

SIMMIAS. Tell us, Socrates—for many tales have I heard and know not which to believe—which do you ?

SOCRATES. Had I the tongue of Glaucus, I could tell you a tale, Simmias ; yet not by the tongue of Glaucus could I prove the truth of it. Yet I have a tale.

SEVERAL. Aye ! tell us, tell us !

SOCRATES. I believe that the earth is round, Brothers, and that it hangs in space, nothing supporting it but the balances which are found there. And from that balance it cannot stray or be turned, but so will always remain. . . . That is my first belief.

My second is that the earth is of vast extent, and that we know only a little of it : that beyond the Pillars of Hercules are larger seas, other lands, to which we have not yet travelled. And as there are these, stretching out and beyond us, unknown, so up and above us are other worlds, fairer than ours, more beautifully formed, and more beautifully inhabited, into which some day, because of the immortality of our souls, we too may enter.

And as, in this earth of ours, air is to water, finer and purer, made radiant by the light : so to the air of our world by comparison is the air there breathed by the souls which dwell in it, whose eyes can behold without blindness the light which shines on it.

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Therefore, Simmias, with such a vision before us, ought we not to fight valiantly, suffer gladly, and endure patiently, so as to obtain in this life the virtue and wisdom which shall bring us to the life beyond? Fair is the prize, and my hope is great!

PHAEDONDES. But do you *know* all this, Socrates?

SOCRATES. No, Phaedondes. But since even Cebes and Simmias now allow me to be certain that there is life beyond the grave, may I not dream about it as the lover—separated from his beloved—dreams of the bliss awaiting him, and to that which he knows is true adds many flowers and adornments wrought by his fancy—since these do but give form and expression to that inner delight of feeling and affection which passion quickens? I do not know, Simmias, whether my description of the life to come is quite accurate, but it expresses very well the attraction it has for me; and I am sure that, however it may differ, it will be better and not worse than I have imagined it. For the Gods know more about beauty than I do, having beauty for ever in their dwelling; and since it is to the Gods we go, we go also to beauty, and there shall behold not less but more of her than we do now. So I believe, Simmias.

SIMMIAS. And I will try to believe, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Therefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who, having cast the trappings of the body, as things alien to the purpose and destiny for which she was made, has arrayed her in those things more incorruptible which can bear her company to the world beyond. You, Simmias and Cebes, and the rest of you, will depart each in

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his own time. I also, as the poet might say, am called of fate.

[He pauses, and from the corridor behind comes the sound of XANTIPPE weeping, who, having now returned, is waiting for a last interview.]

And since I must soon drink the poison, it would be better for me, perhaps, to take my bath now, so that the women need not trouble to wash my body when it is dead. *[He rises and moves toward the corridor.]*

Come with me, Crito ; I have things to say to you.

[CRITO rises and follows him. As SOCRATES passes out, XANTIPPE flings herself upon him.]

XANTIPPE. O Socrates ! Socrates !

SOCRATES *[soothing her]*. There, there ! So you were waiting for me ? Come in !

[They pass from view into another chamber, from which presently an ATTENDANT comes and fetches water. CEBES moves from the door, by which he has been seated, and stands lost in thought. CRITOBULUS goes quietly out on an errand of his own.]

APOLLODORUS. Cebes, of what are you thinking ?

CEBES. Of Socrates ; of what else could I be thinking ?

APOLLODORUS. Yes ; but what specially just now ? for I saw on your face a look of doubt or perplexity.

CEBES. I was wondering, Apollodorus, whether of all the questions we have asked Socrates and he has answered, there is not one—though it must have occurred to many—which nobody has asked him.

APOLLODORUS. What question ?

CEBES. Whether his own happiness has truly always been independent of—circumstances.

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MENEXENUS. In what respect, Cebes ?

CEBES. Quite late in life Socrates married again. Most men marry when they are young. Why did he marry then ?

MENEXENUS. Marry at all ? Or marry—as he did ?

CEBES. In either case it is a question I should like to have answered ; since we believe that of all men Socrates is the wisest.

AESCHINES. Then are we not sure, Cebes, that whatever Socrates did, he did it believing it was good both for himself and others ?

CEBES. I have no doubt of that.

AESCHINES. Then we know why he married.

CEBES. Yes ; but we do not know *what* good he thought he was doing when he married.

PHAEDONDES. When Socrates talks to us, Cebes, often we do not at the time know all the good he is doing us. Yet we know it afterwards.

CEBES. Yes ; but from that what do you make follow ?

PHAEDONDES. And is not this, I was going to say, the kind of good he was always doing us : that though we could not understand all his wisdom, he made us understand our own foolishness ?

CEBES. Yes ?

PHAEDONDES. And thus, though he did not make us wise like himself, he made us less foolish.

CEBES. Well ?

PHAEDONDES. Nor did he, as he might so easily have done, leave those who had so poor an understanding, in order to converse only with others who were wise like himself.

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CEBES. No ; he did not.

PHAEDONDES. And if there was one among us who, to the rest, seemed most foolish, was not Socrates just as kind and patient with him as with others ?

CEBES. He was.

PHAEDONDES. And just as friendly—showing the same good will to him as to the rest.

CEBES. Yes ; that was his way.

PHAEDONDES. Then may not that explain why Socrates did other things also, the good of which we have been slow to understand ?

CEBES. It might, Phaedondes.

EUCLEIDES. Yes ; in all you have been saying, I agree. But might not Socrates seem rather trying and troublesome to some one who could not understand him ?

PHAEDONDES. Often we did not understand him at first ; but we did not find him trying. He was patient with us till we did understand.

EUCLEIDES. I said—trying to some one who *could* not understand. Such people may exist.

[CRITOBULUS *returns, bringing with him bread, fruit, and wine.*

EPIGENES. They do indeed ! For some, I remember, who, after hearing him for a while, left him and did not return.

EUCLEIDES. But such an one, who could not leave him, might find him trying, Cebes.

CEBES. I suppose she might, Eucleides.

PHAEDONDES. And he may have thought that would be good for him, Cebes.

[CRITO *re-enters.*

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CEBES. He may. It makes me unhappy to have to differ from Socrates.

CRITOBULUS. Father, do you know whether Socrates has eaten anything to-day ?

CRITO. I think not. No, I am sure of it.

CRITOBULUS. Might he not be persuaded, if one sent it in to him ?

CRITO. You can try.

CRITOBULUS. Also a little wine ; for I think he needs something.

CRITO. Go and see, then, if you can persuade him.

CRITOBULUS. Will you, Phaedo, do this for me ? He is more likely to be persuaded by you than by any one.

[PHAEDO takes it silently, and goes in. A moment later XANTIPPE re-appears in the corridor, beckoning excitedly.

XANTIPPE. Come ; Come ; Come !

[The children run to her ; she takes them in. Cries of lamentation follow.

SIMMIAS. So you have left them alone, Crito ?

CRITO. Women are very difficult. We don't understand them.

SIMMIAS. Eucleides has just been saying they don't understand us.

CRITO. That is probably true also.

[PHAEDO returns, carrying the viands, his face expressive of grief. All turn and look at him silently. CRITOBULUS goes across to him with an interrogative gesture.

PHAEDO [speaking with difficulty]. He will take nothing. . . . He only eats, he says, when his body

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needs it. . . . And to-day . . . his body . . . will not need it.

[He pauses, overcome. The others try to restrain their grief. Within, the sounds of lamentation continue.]

But he says . . . that we are to eat . . . because we . . . do need it. . . . So, here it is, Brothers.

[He offers it to two, who shake their heads and turn away.]

CRITO. Yes : we must do our best now to please him ; since this may be the last time.

[He takes some bread and begins eating. The others help themselves. The JAILOR passes along the corridor and goes in. Louder wailing is heard as he enters. Then the children come out and go back the way they entered. XANTIPPE follows, wailing, and beating her breast. The JAILOR, following, turns, pauses, and looks back. SOCRATES enters. They all rise silently. The JAILOR goes. SOCRATES comes slowly forward ; he sits down, and motions for them to do likewise. For a few moments there is dead silence ; then CRITO speaks.]

CRITO. Socrates, have you any further commands—about your children, or any other service we can do for you ?

SOCRATES. Only take care of yourselves, Crito. Doing that, you will be rendering me and mine a service, whether you promise it or no. But I do not ask for promises.

CRITO. We will do our best, Socrates. . . . And how shall we bury you ?

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SOCRATES. How you like, Crito. But first you must catch me ; and make sure that I do not run away. . . . See how at that he opens his eyes ! I cannot make Crito believe that I am still the talking Socrates ; he fancies I am the other—the dead body—which I shall presently be leaving behind me. And he asks how he is to bury me.

[While he speaks, outside comes the JAILOR, followed by two ATTENDANTS, one carrying the vessel of poison and the cup. He halts outside to the right, and stands hesitating with bowed head.]

And though I have been talking at such length, comforting you and myself with the assurance that when I have drunk the poison I shall not remain here, but shall go to a better place, my words have had no effect upon Crito. Therefore, what I have failed to do you must do for me, and convince Crito, when I am gone, that it is not me but only a body that remains. And do not let him cry out when he sees it being buried, or burned, as though it were hurting me. For it won't, Crito.

So be of good cheer, dear friends ; and when you are burying the body say : ' This is only the body.' And with that do as custom ordains, or whatever else you think best.

[The JAILOR, signing to the Cup-bearer to wait, passes forward, and followed by the other, enters the inner corridor.]

CRITO. We know that what you say is true, Socrates. Nevertheless, when you are gone from it, your body will still be dear to us.

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SOCRATES. As you will, friends. The time for argument is now over.

[*The JAILOR has re-appeared at the door leading into the corridor. He halts, and stands looking in ; then advances toward SOCRATES.*

JAILOR. Socrates, you, sir, who surely are the noblest, gentlest, and best that ever came to this place, you will not be angry with me like those others, who rail and curse at the very sight of me, when, obeying my orders, I bring the poison and tell them they must drink. I am sure you bear no malice against me, since you know that the blame lies with others. So now, sir, farewell ; meet cheerfully . . . you know what I come for.

SOCRATES. Thanks, friend, for your good wishes. Fare you as well as I shall. Give your orders, and I will obey.

[*The JAILOR goes out.*

What a nice fellow ! Ever since I have been here, he has come constantly to see me, doing everything in the kindest way possible. And now see how generously he grieves. We must do as he bids, Crito. So, if the cup is ready, let the attendant bring it, or if not let him prepare it.

CRITO. The sun is still high, Socrates ; and the order is not—to an hour. Why hurry ? There is time enough.

SOCRATES. Delay is for those who think to gain by it, Crito. But I do not. Putting off the moment, I should only feel foolish, hanging to a life whose use is ended. Do, then, as I say, please.

[*CRITO signs to the ATTENDANT at the door, who goes out. A moment later the JAILOR is seen*

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outside, signalling to the other ATTENDANT who carries the poison. They go in together. APOLLODORUS, with a gasping cry, leaps up and rushes out. In the outer corridor to the left he flings himself down and lies weeping. As they enter the cell, the JAILOR takes the cup from the ATTENDANT, who pours the poison into it. He brings it to SOCRATES, who reaches, and is about to take it.

SOCRATES. You, friend, who are more experienced in these matters than I, tell me, what exactly am I to do ?

JAILOR. After you have drunk, walk about till your legs fail you. Then lie down, and let the poison do its work.

[SOCRATES takes the cup.

SOCRATES. I thank you. . . . May I, from this, make first a libation ? . . . Yes ? No ?

JAILOR. Here is only enough, Socrates, for—what is necessary.

SOCRATES. I understand. But this at least I may do—pray God to prosper my journey into the other world. Amen. So let it be.

[As he drinks some of his DISCIPLES break into loud weeping. Others bow their heads and cover their faces. SOCRATES gives back the cup to the ATTENDANT.

Friends ! What is this for ? I would not let the women come for this reason, lest they should so offend. May not a man die in peace ? Be quiet ; have patience. It will not be long now.

[He tries to stand up, but fails. The ATTENDANT helps him to his feet.

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O Asclepius, divine physician, this is a good cure !-
I shall be . . . in your debt . . . sooner than I
. . . expected.

ATTENDANT. Will you walk, sir ?

SOCRATES. Yes, friend, so far as I am able.

ATTENDANT. Now, sir.

[SOCRATES moves slowly across the cell followed
by the ATTENDANT, watchful to support him
if necessary.]

Now again, sir.

[He crosses back again, and pausing, rests his
hands for a moment on PHAEDO'S bowed head.]

SOCRATES. Farewell, Phaedo !

[PHAEDO, with head still bowed, reaches up his
hands and lays them on those of SOCRATES.]

ATTENDANT. Try once more, sir.

[SOCRATES returns, and rests his hands on the
shoulders of CRITO.]

SOCRATES. Farewell, Crito. I am escaping now,
even as you wished me. Farewell, all of you.

[As he moves away his feet fail. Assisted by the
ATTENDANT he sits down on the couch.]

SOCRATES. What now ?

ATTENDANT. Only to lie down. You will be all
right then, sir.

[SOCRATES lies down. The ATTENDANT goes and
stands at his feet. The JAILOR moves away to
the door and turns his back. The ATTENDANT
bends down and presses SOCRATES' foot.]

Did you feel that, sir ?

SOCRATES. No : nothing.

ATTENDANT [pressing his leg]. Nor that, sir ?

SOCRATES. No.

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ATTENDANT. If you feel anything, sir, just say, or make a sign.

[*He begins to press higher, till he reaches the body.*
Nothing, sir? You feel nothing?

SOCRATES [*touching himself first above the waist, then lower down*]. Here: not here. . . . When it gets to the heart that will be the end, I suppose.

PHAEDO [*weeping*]. The end! The end!

[*SOCRATES lies back, covers his face, and remains motionless. The ATTENDANT, after touching him once again, stands back: his work is over.*

[*Slowly, without change of position, SOCRATES uncovers his face again.*

SOCRATES. Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius. Will you remember . . . to pay it?

CRITO. It shall be done, Socrates. . . .

[*SOCRATES again covers his face.*

Is there anything else?

[*There is no answer. After a pause, the ATTENDANT lays his hand on SOCRATES' heart. CRITO looks at him questioningly. The man nods his head, and moves away to the door. There he speaks to the JAILOR. The JAILOR turns and looks. All the DISCIPLES have bowed their heads; with covered faces they sit or stand motionless. Advancing slowly, the JAILOR uncovers the face. SOCRATES is dead.*



THE
DEATH
OF SO-
CRATES

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